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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000096

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [PTER](#) [PARM](#) [SO](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: ADMIRAL HUNT DISCUSSES SOMALIA AND MILITARY
ASSISTANCE WITH YEMENI SECURITY FORCES

REF: A. SANAA 31
[1](#)B. 2005 SANAA 2817

Classified By: AMBASSADOR THOMAS C. KRAJESKI, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On January 21, visiting Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) Commander Rear Admiral Richard Hunt and Ambassador met with Defense Minister Mohammad Nasser Ahmed Ali to discuss Somalia and military-military cooperation. Ali expressed concern that violence in Somalia would lead to increased terrorist activity in Yemen and voiced ROYG support for efforts to create a stable and inclusive Somali government. RADM Hunt also met with Interior Ministry officials Colonel Yahya Saleh, Commander of the Central Security Force, and Brigadier Ali Rasa'a, Chairman of the Yemen Coast Guard (YCG). Both expressed their appreciation, saying Yemen's success against terrorism would not have been possible without USG assistance. End Summary.

MOD on Somalia: Cooperation Needed to Prevent
"Terrorist Swamp"

[1](#)2. (C) Ali expressed appreciation for the December 2006 visit of several top Yemeni military officials to the United States, adding that USG support helps "improve military skills and the bilateral relationship." Ali especially welcomed more cooperation on Somalia. "We expect terrorists to return" to Yemen, he said, so the military strengthened its presence along the Gulf of Aden to prevent Somali extremists from escaping to Yemen. RADM Hunt thanked the ROYG for its support on Somalia, noting that President Saleh's "excellent" suggestion to Assistant Secretary Frazer during a recent visit (ref A) to refrain from disarmament until security was established was well-received by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG).

[1](#)3. (C) RADM Hunt shared that the USG supported a three-pronged approach to securing stability: 1) Capturing remaining Al-Qaeda and extremist Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) elements in southern Somalia; 2) Providing security in major cities and creating an inclusive government; and 3) Restoring humanitarian assistance. Ali voiced support for the strategy, stressing that the international community could not afford to "make the same mistakes again" and allow Somalia to become a "terrorist swamp." Director of Military Intelligence Siyani added that the TFG must not become "a government of ex-warlords" and should reach out to CIC

moderates.

¶4. (C) Ambassador noted that there was now "a real opportunity" to bring lasting peace, which Somalia and the international community cannot waste. Hunt added that donor support would be crucial, including the creation of a stabilization force under the African Union and public support for the TFG, especially from the Arab League. Ali anticipated that Arab League presidents would soon discuss possible support for the TFG, but stated that Yemen would not provide troops for the stabilization force because UNSCR 1725 prevents participation by surrounding countries.

¶5. (C) In response to Ambassador's question on the current refugee situation, Ali noted that the number of Somali refugees decreased dramatically since the end of December, which he attributed to the military's "stricter policies." (Comment: Ali is likely referring to the increased military presence along the Gulf of Aden coast and a December 27, 2006 incident in which the Yemeni Navy and smugglers exchanged gunfire, resulting in the capsizing of one boat and the disappearance at sea of another. UNHCR estimates the number of confirmed and presumed dead at about 150. End Comment) Ali said, however, that Yemen continues to grant refugee status to Somalis who reach the shore.

Counterterrorism Success Stories: CSF-CTU and YCG

¶6. (C) In a separate meeting, Commander Yahya Saleh thanked the USG for its support to the Central Security Force -

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Counterterrorism Unit (CSF-CTU), saying its successes against Al-Qaeda (ref B) would not have been possible without the training and equipment provided under the Foreign Military Financing program. RADM Hunt commended the "courage and skill" of the elite unit's soldiers, saying the United States was committed to supporting their efforts. Saleh, a nephew of President Saleh, noted that other Yemeni agencies were beginning to recognize the unit's abilities, but more cooperation was needed, especially in terms of intelligence. Saleh expressed frustration with the lack of cooperation from the intelligence services, especially when the CSF-CTU is asked to execute a mission on short notice with incomplete intelligence. He hoped to soon organize a seminar, with U.S. and British support, to bring together the CSF-CTU and the intelligence services to explore ways to improve the flow of information.

¶7. (C) YCG Chairman Rasa'a also expressed his appreciation for USG support and anticipated that the YCG would soon complete establishing bases in the Aden and Bab al-Mandeb region, giving them control of over 500 kilometers of coast. (Note: Both the CSF-CTU and YCG were established and developed under the FMF program, and have quickly become Yemen's most capable security forces. End Note).

¶8. (U) This cable was cleared by Rear Admiral Hunt.
KRAJESKI